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# ALBANIAN QUESTION

BY

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# THE ALBANIAN QUESTION.

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At last we have reached the end of the terrible war which for over four years has drenched humanity with blood.

Begun, as it was, by lust for territorial and commercial conquest, it will finish by the triumph of justice. Had not Imperial Russia collapsed, she would have extended her bear's paws, crushing the weak and threatening even her allies. But Russia's collapse permitted Germany to carry out her programme, and in either case the safety of nationality was imperilled.

Europe, the enemy of all innovation, clinging to her old diplomacy, was unable to change her system. America has fortunately saved the situation by coming forward on the side of the Entente, which preached democracy without entirely believing in its triumph. President Wilson has entered the arena and has begun slowly but firmly to calm its passions.

The complete debacle of the enemy's camp is due as much to the moral effect as to the material force of the Allies. President Wilson's principles have gone straight to the hearts of the peoples as a ray of consolation and hope, in the lands not only of the Entente but of the Central Powers also.

It is true that the problems to be solved in Europe are complex and difficult. But one thing is certain, and that is that no lasting peace can be made unless the solution of these problems is based upon the principles of nationality.

It is therefore the duty of the Governments of the Great Powers to study the problems of race attentively and impartially before attending the Peace Conference.

One of these questions—one indeed which ought to command the serious consideration not only of statesmen but of all those who have any influence upon the redrawing of maps and the destinies of peoples—is the Albanian Question, a question which is little understood, and which appears to be small, but which is nevertheless of the greatest importance.



It is big with consequences, and if those whose duty it is to consider it persist, as in the past, in regarding it from the standpoint of foreign aspirations, and not from the point of view of the Albanian people and public interest, those consequences may prove disastrous.

It is in order to facilitate the study of our national question that we present the following short account of our history, our position, and our national aspirations, and we ask only that they may be considered impartially and carefully before any judgment be formed.

### POPULATION.

The Albanian population may be reckoned at about two and a-half million souls, the large majority of whom inhabit the south-western portion of the Balkan Peninsula.

### RELIGION.

The Albanians belong to three religions: the Roman Catholic Church, the Greek Orthodox Church, and to Islam.

The Mahomedans exceed in number both the Catholics and Orthodox put together.

The members of these three faiths all live together, but the Catholics are more numerous in the North and the Orthodox in the South. The Mahomedans are found everywhere, but form compact masses in the centre of the country.

Among the many falsehoods which have been circulated with the object of proving that the Albanians cannot form an independent State, are the statements that they are divided by religious differences, and that they do not all speak the same language. Religion having always and everywhere exercised a great influence on the mind of man, and being even to-day a frequent cause of division in West Europe, the lies which have been spread about the religious differences of the Albanians have, not unnaturally, been widely credited.

Nevertheless, Albania is perhaps the only country in Europe where religion has produced no dissensions among the inhabitants, who have remained united at every period of their national history.

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, in her celebrated letters, writing in 1717, describes vividly the Albanian guard which

escorted her on her journey across Turkey, and mentions as a unique fact that the Albanians make no distinction between Christians and Moslems.

Marriages between Christians and Mahomedans are common in Albania, in spite of the fact that they are contrary to the respective religions. Christians and Moslems may be found in the same family, dwelling amicably under one roof. There are Christian chiefs to Mahomedan clans, and *vice versa*. Impartial observers have in fact written much that is true upon this fact. It will suffice to quote one official document, which destroys the legend of religious dissension.

Monsieur Aubaret, the French Commissioner at the Eastern Roumelian Commission on the affairs of Turkey, in 1880, presented the following memorandum on the Sandjak of Scutari: "The people live together in perfect harmony. They are Albanian before everything. If it be true to say that the Catholics are sincerely attached to their religion, it is none the less true that for them, as well as for their Mahomedan compatriots, national sentiment, love for their land and respect for their ancient customs take the first place beyond all else. The spirit of dignity and independence, possessed alike by all Albanians, is strengthened among them by their markedly warlike characteristics. It is thanks to their indomitable vigour that in spite of the frequent endeavours of the Sublime Porte, these mountaineers have succeeded in preserving, almost intact, the privileges which they have enjoyed from the earliest times."

The Greeks, Serbs and Bulgars who, in large numbers, have been converted to Islam, have renounced their nationality and have indeed out-Turked the Turks. The Albanians have remained Albanians throughout.

### THE LANGUAGE QUESTION.

The Language question is even simpler. One and the same language is spoken by the Albanians from one end of the country to the other, from Mitrovitza and the northern mountains to the Gulf of Arta and eastward through Macedonia.

That in this wide area dialectical differences are to be found which puzzle the stranger, is but natural.



A foreigner, even if he knows English well, is equally unable to understand the popular speech of Northumberland or Somerset. To us Albanians the dialect of the Gheg (in the North) and the Tosk (in the South) present no difficulties at all. The language is one and the same. It is, moreover, one of the oldest languages in Europe, and our people have clung to it tenaciously in the face of much enemy opposition.

A short sketch of our history will make this abundantly clear.

## HISTORY.

We first hear of our ancestors from classical authors who describe and give the names of many of the independent clans who inhabited the Balkan Peninsula when its history dawns. All authorities agree that they are not Greek. The Greeks, in fact, designated them "barbarians." The main groups formed by these clans were known as Macedonia, Illyria and Epirus. The inhabitants of all three, so Strabo informs us, spoke the same tongue and had similar customs.

The very name of Macedonia, formerly known as "Emathia," derives in all probability from the Albanian word E-madhia (the great). As for Illyria, "liria" in Albanian means "freedom," and we Albanians interpret it as "land of the free."

Strabo gives specimens of the language in his day, and also place-names, and their strong resemblance to modern Albanian justifies us in believing our language to be the direct descendant of that spoken by Alexander the Great of Macedon and of King Pyrrhus of Epirus.

In old days Illyria and Epirus together extended from the neighbourhood of Trieste to the Gulf of Arta, the north side of which, as Strabo particularly informs us, was inhabited by the Epirotes, and the south by Greeks.

Inland the Illyrian and Epirote land spread widely. Thus, all that we now know as Bosnia, the Herzegovina, Montenegro and a large part of Serbia, was comprised in Illyria, as well as modern Albania.

The inhabitants of the Dalmatian coast harried the Roman shipping and thus brought about war with Rome: struggles which lasted indeed some two centuries. "The difficulty," says J. B. Bury, the eminent historian, "experienced by

the Romans in subduing and incorporating into the Empire these brave tribes is well known."

That the Illyrians had already reached a considerable pitch of civilisation is proved by the numerous weapons and ornaments found in the pre Roman graves throughout Bosnia, Serbia and Albania. The Illyrians were, it appears, among the first to manufacture and export iron.

The Romans, as usual, founded colonies, built towns and made roads—traces of which still exist. But the native population seem to have retained local autonomy under their own chiefs. The clansmen, moreover, displayed the keen intelligence which is their birthright. The conquered became the rulers. Constantine the Great, Diocletian and Justinian, as well as other Emperors of lesser note, were of native blood.

Christianity arrived early in Illyria. "Round about Illyria," says St. Paul, "have I fully preached the Gospel of Christ." The Albanians claim him as the first missionary among them. Illyria formed part of the Patriarchate of Rome at an early date, and a large number of the North Albanians (Ghegs) are faithful to Rome to this day. Scutari and Antivari have been bishoprics since the fourth century.

The Roman Empire, in the East was repeatedly invaded by hordes of barbarians from beyond the Danube. The Avars devastated wide tracts, and after them came the Slavs. These, the ancestors of the Serbs, Montenegrins and Bosniaks, swarmed in in overpowering numbers. They settled first in some districts depopulated by the Avars, and by the seventh century were widely spread in the Peninsula. They were a tribal and a pastoral people, and, taking possession of the rich plains for their flocks, they drove Roman civilisation to the coast of the Adriatic, where it has never completely died out. Of the native Illyrian population, that of the North disappeared. But southwards the Illyrians defended themselves in the mountains of modern Albania, and there they preserved their language and customs uninterruptedly up to the present day, against all comers.

The Slavs, being a pagan people, swept away Christianity in the districts they occupied. Nor were they as a whole converted till the ninth century, and then by missionaries from Salonika. When the final separation between the



Eastern and Western Churches took place in 1054, the Slavs threw in their lot with Byzantium.

The Christians of North Albania, after some wavering—due to Slav pressure—have, it would appear, remained faithful to Rome throughout. The South came more and more under the influence of the Eastern Orthodox Church and adopted it.

### BULGAR AND SERB PERIODS.

The history of the Balkans is one of many warring races. The Serbo-Albanian enmity dates from the arrival of the Serbs' ancestors into the Peninsula. But the Serbs were not the only foe with which Albania had in early days to contend. Following swift on the coming of the Serbs, came the Bulgars, a warrior people, led by their king. They subdued the Serbs and even threatened Byzantium. The Greco-Bulgar hatred dates from the days when the history of Byzantium was a long and bloody struggle between Greek and Bulgar. Albania, too, suffered. The great Bulgar Tsar Simeon, in the tenth century ruled an Empire which included most of Serbia and a large part of Albania. But all the mediæval Balkan Empires were short-lived. They were compounded of many inimical elements, and broke to pieces soon after the death of the conqueror that made them. Big Bulgaria was broken up in the eleventh century. Nor did the second great Bulgar Empire of the thirteenth century leave any permanent mark in Albania save a few place-names, though Tsar Asen II. ruled from the Black Sea to the Adriatic, and included all Albania as far as Durazzo in his Empire.

Not till the fall of the second Bulgar Empire did the Serbs play an important part in Balkan affairs. A tribal people, they had been weak before the united Bulgar force. In the twelfth century they united under the rule of the remarkable line of Nemanya princes, and established the Kingdom of Rashia and extended it rapidly. Rashia, in Albanian, means plain. It is possible, therefore, that Rashia was the original Illyrian name of the plains of Kosovo. The Serbs were, in fact, known by the name of Rashians even into the eighteenth century.

Each of the Nemanya kings extended his realm by conquest. They spread over North Albania and seized Scutari. Scutari,



the capital of North Albania, is one of the oldest capitals in Europe. It is first mentioned under its native name of Scodra in 604 B.C. And as Shkodra it is known still to all Albanians. The name of Scutari was given to it by the Venetians in the thirteenth century.

That the Albanians were, when conquered by the Serbs, Catholic, is evident from contemporary accounts. In 1321 they appealed to Charles of Anjou and to Filippo of Taranto to force the Serb King Milutin to respect their religious rights. In 1332 the French friar, Père Brochard, describes the land and people. "It is inhabited," he says, "by two peoples, the Albanians and the Latins, who both belong to the Church of Rome. The Albanians have a language quite other than Latin. . . . They have four Bishops under the Archbishop of Antivari. . . . Both these peoples are oppressed under the very hard servitude of the most hateful and abominable lordship of the Slavs."

That the friar did not exaggerate is shown by the extremely severe laws enacted against the Catholics by the great Tsar Stefan Dushan in 1349 in his celebrated canon. Here we find that those of the Latin heresy who refuse to be converted are punishable by death, as are also Latin priests who attempt to convert anyone to the Latin faith. And so forth.

These laws doubtless served to further exasperate the hatred between Serb and Albanian, for to the bitterness of conquest was added religious persecution.

During the twenty years of Stefan Dushan's reign, Serbia was indeed great. It included almost the whole Balkan Peninsula, and Dushan was planning to seize Byzantium when he died suddenly (1356). On his decease, great Serbia rapidly fell to pieces.

Albania was among the first districts to break loose. Led by local chiefs, we soon find the Albanians fighting against Marko Kralyevitch, the popular hero of the Serbs, and taking from him not only the towns of Ochrida and Kastoria, which he had recently taken from the Albanian chief, Andrea Musaki, but also Ipek and Prizren. Nor was great Serbia ever again reconstructed. The Balkan Peninsula was invaded by a foreign foe—the Turks.

## THE TURKS.

The Turks, we should not forget, came first as the allies of the Greeks against the Serbs. On their arrival, the Peninsula was a struggling mass of rival races in which none was supreme, and they were thus an easy prey. The Balkan peoples were so occupied by their own differences that they did not realise the Turkish danger till too late.

In 1389 Lazar, who was Tsar of a very small Serbia, summoned a large army of Serbs, Albanians and Bosniaks (Bosnia was now an independent kingdom), and met the Turks on the field of Kosovo. Rival Serb chieftains were at this time struggling for supremacy, and one of them—the Tsar's own son-in-law, Vuk Brankovitch—deserted, with all his men, to the Turks. This gave the victory to the Sultan, and established the Turk in Europe until to-day.

The Serbs accepted Turkish suzerainty and were ruled for some time by descendants of the traitor Brankovitch.

But the Albanians offered a long and stubborn resistance. Venice aided them. For some time the Venetians had been creeping down the Adriatic coast and founding trading ports. Their relations with the Albanians were good, and inter-marriage of noble families took place. Together the Albanians and Venetians fought the Turks.

In the mountains at this time there were many notable Albanian chieftains. The Dukagini ruled over a large part of the northern mountains, which still bear their name. Lek Dukagin is famed as the author of the Code of Mountain Law which still exists. The Dushmani family ruled in the Pulatj mountains, where the Dushmani clan still dwells. Gropa ruled at Dibra, and the Topias ruled all Central and Southern Albania.

## SKENDERBEG.

Then it was that Albania's greatest leader, George Kastriot, called Skenderbeg, appeared as the champion of our nation and of Christendom. He was one of the great warriors of history. The Turks who invaded South Albania reached and attacked his father's town of Kroya. George was then a child, and he and his brothers were carried off as hostages. The other boys are reported to have been poisoned. George,



who was remarkable for courage and intelligence, was brought up as a soldier and a Moslem. But on his father's death he seized an early opportunity to throw off both the Turks and their religion, and rode away to Ochrida, where he recruited some followers. Thence he reached Kroya, where he was joyfully hailed as king, and put himself at the head of the Albanian forces. His courage and skill were amazing. For twenty-four years he kept the Turks at bay. Two successive Sultans sent huge armies against him in vain. His realm extended into Macedonia, and Ochrida and Dibra too were his towns. Bitter was the grief of all Albanians when, in 1478, Dibra, one of Skenderbeg's towns, was given by the Powers to the Serbs.

But the enemy pressed upon Skenderbeg with increasing force. He went to Rome to beg help. Pope Pius II. summoned the Princes of Europe to a crusade which should combine its forces with those of Skenderbeg under the command of the latter and drive the Turk from Europe. Though weak and ill, the old Pope enthusiastically declared that he himself would accompany the army. But the Powers of Europe—not for the first or last time—were torn by jealousy. It was opined that the eviction of the Turk would most benefit Venice, and many were reluctant to fight for the aggrandisement of Venice. The Pope in vain urged that this view was unchristian. He went to Ancona to await the arrival of the troops, and there he died. No help came to Skenderbeg. As an old man, he again appealed to Rome, and Pope Paul assisted him with money and supplies. But no army came to reinforce him. Nevertheless, he struggled on with his valiant men and remained unconquered till he died of fever at Alessio in 1478, aged 63. The Sultan, on hearing of his death, cried triumphantly: "Asia and Europe are mine at last. Woe to Christendom! She has lost her sword and shield!"

There was no chieftain capable of replacing Skenderbeg. Deep was the mourning for him. "Crowds of maidens," says Sabellicus, "though surrounded by the din of battle, assembled every eighth day in the principal cities and sang hymns in praise of the departed hero." The nation resisted the overpowering force of the Turk for yet another ten years.

Scutari, bravely defended by the Albanians and Venetians,

fell in 1479, after a terrible siege. And the Turks then soon overran the whole land. Numbers of Albanians fled to Italy, where 104 Albanian-speaking villages exist to this day.

The mountain chiefs long hoped for help from Venice, and sent many appeals thither. But Venice, too, was hard hit by the Turks, and sent no assistance. There was nothing for it but to accept Turkish rule. From the beginning the Albanians had contrived to retain local autonomy. In the seventeenth century many began to go over to Islam. But, as above stated, unlike the other Balkan peoples, when Mahomedanised they retained their strong sense of nationality. No sooner did the Moslem Albanian chiefs rise to power than they began to work for independence. The Albanians, both Moslem and Christian, descended from the mountains and began a struggle to retake the plains from which their forefathers had been driven by the conquering Serbs. Bit by bit they regained territory and settled upon it.

Attacked by the Albanians on the one side, and oppressed on the other by the Turkish Government, and oppressed also by the Greek Church—which strove ever to replace the Serb and Bulgar Churches by Greek ones throughout Turkey in Europe—the Serbs of Kosovo, led by the Patriarch of Ipek, decided to emigrate and moved in vast masses into Austria, where they were given land in the Banat by the Emperor.

The Albanians speedily resettled the vacated lands, occupying the whole of the Kosovo district as far as Mitrovitz and north-east as far as Nish and Uskub. Eastward they spread as far as Monastir, and the greater part of the Moslem villages of Macedonia are Albanian. In truth, they thus retook a great part of their ancient Illyria and Macedonia. Christian and Moslem united to preserve and maintain their customs, rights and language, and brooked but little Turkish interference.

Nor was it long before the Albanians struck for liberty. Ali Pasha, who was born in 1740, began his career in Turkish service. Made Governor of Janina, he extended his rule by degrees, rapidly gained followers and popularity, and made himself ruler of the whole of South Albania as far as Preveza and Arta. A practically independent Prince and a skilled diplomat, he had representatives in foreign lands and entered



into negotiations. He had many dealings with England, and strove to gain her support. Contemporary travellers note the order that he established, and his organising capacity.

At the same time the Bushatli family, the hereditary Pashas of Scutari, likewise rose to power, extended their Pashalik largely by conquest, and were soon a menace to the Turks.

The Sultan objected strongly to this threatened rise of Albania. A Turkish force was sent against the Bushatlis and was defeated, which still further incensed the Turks. Waiting their opportunity, they fell upon Ali Pasha when he was a very old man. A large force successfully besieged him in his palace on the Lake of Janina, took both him and his sons prisoners, beheaded them all, and sent their heads to Constantinople in 1821. South Albania then fell entirely into Turkish hands.

The Bushatli Pashas ruled yet awhile in the North. In 1829 the Russians attacked Turkey, and the Pasha of Scutari seized the moment when the Russian Army was approaching Constantinople to march also against the Turks. Unfortunately the Russian General mistook the Pasha's object and believed him to be coming to reinforce the Sultan. He therefore concluded a hasty and unexpected peace which left the Turks free to throw the whole of their forces against the rebellious Pasha. A large Turkish army fell upon North Albania and ravaged it; killing or sending into exile all the leaders and exiling the Bushatlis to Asia Minor. Turkish governors were appointed everywhere, and Turkish garrisons placed in the larger towns. All Albania thus fell under Turkish rule though the mountain clans retained their autonomy throughout. But quiet was there none.

## THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

The beginning of the nineteenth century was a time of great stress and struggle in the Balkan Peninsula. Repeated attacks by the Russians and Austrians, who each pretended they were animated by a desire to free the Christians from Turkish rule, and were in truth aiming only at territorial gains, had greatly weakened Turkish power and roused, too, the hopes of the subject peoples. Serbia rose first and, with the aid of both Austria and Russia, attained autonomy. Greece

rose shortly afterwards and, also with European help, obtained her freedom.

The Greeks were greatly helped, too, by the Albanians of the South, of whose valour Lord Byron tells. In return for this help they hoped that Greece would aid them, too, when their time came. But Greece has known no gratitude. Far from aiding Albania to gain freedom, Greece has had but one object, and that is to obtain more and more of Albanian territory.

The hatred of the Albanian for the Greek is therefore as intense as his hatred for the Serb.

We Albanians wish only to dwell in peace with our neighbours, but this we cannot do so long as these neighbours strive and intrigue to annex Albanian territory.

Imperial Russia has been Albania's worst foe, for, aiming always at hegemony in the Balkans, she has supported every Slav claim to territorial aggrandisement at Albania's expense.

### THE SUPREME PAN-SLAV EFFORT.

In 1876-77 came the supreme Pan-Slav effort. Much as Albania detested Turkish rule, she found herself forced to fight on the side of the Turks in order to save her own lands from Slavonic aggression. The Turks, however, were beaten. Russia's terms were hard. The Treaty of San Stefano did not even recognise the existence of Albania. Large tracts of it, including the wholly Albanian town of Koritza, were by this treaty allotted to Bulgaria. The Treaty of San Stefano was overthrown by the Powers, but the Treaty of Berlin which replaced it was but little better.

It has, in fact, been called the "Treaty of Albania's Burial." Koritza was saved, it is true; but large tracts of Albanian-inhabited lands were given over to Serbia, Montenegro and Greece. It was monstrously unjust.

The Albanians seized their arms and formed the Albanian League, whose centre was at Prizren, but whose branches spread throughout the land.

By order of the Powers, their resistance was crushed by the Turkish Army, but not without severe fighting, in which more than one Turkish General lost his life. Nevertheless, the Albanians managed to save much territory in the North.



Their seaport of Dulcigno, a wholly Albanian town, was, however, torn from them by a naval demonstration of the combined Powers. Surely the most disgraceful example of how a powerful armed gang can bully a small nation, that history relates.

Albania's rising was by no means fruitless. She succeeded in retaining all her Southern territory and also in attracting the attention of some impartial judges.

#### THE EASTERN ROUMELIAN COMMISSION, 1880.

In 1880 an International Commission, called the Eastern Roumelian Commission, was appointed to regulate the affairs of Turkey. Great Britain was ably represented by Lord Edmund Fitzmaurice, who recognised the important fact that if peace were to be permanent in the Balkans the rights of each nationality must be considered.

Convinced, after careful examination, that the Albanians had been treated with great injustice, he made strong representations on the subject, and recommended the immediate formation of a large and autonomous Albania, which should become independent on the break-up of the Turkish Empire in Europe.

Having caused enquiries to be made about the population of the various vilayets, he recommended that the State of Albania should consist of the whole of the vilayets of Scutari and Janina, the larger part of the vilayet of Kosovo, and a large part of the vilayet of Monastir. In this scheme he was strongly supported by H.B.M. Ambassador at Constantinople, Lord Goschen.

The formation, however, of an independent Albania did not suit the ambitious plans either of Austria or of Russia. And, unfortunately for Europe, nothing was done save to recommend certain reforms to the Turks.

The Albanian question remained and remains unsolved—a menace to future peace.

Though by means of the Albanian League a certain amount of Albanian territory was saved, yet the Treaty of Berlin resulted disastrously for Albania.

Among other places, it gave the town and district of Vranje to the Serbs, who at once proceeded to forcibly evict the

whole Albanian population and confiscate their property. Wholesale confiscations and evictions took place also in the districts given to Montenegro. And in none of the annexed districts were any of the Albanians who remained allowed schools in their own language. They had to choose between denationalisation or emigration. Albania was now in an evil plight. Not only her neighbours, but the Turks, too, conspired to crush her nationality and prevent the development of national aspirations.

The Turks, having broken the power of the Albanian Pashas, held the land in an iron grip. Other Balkan races, when they awakened to the necessity for education, received the support and assistance of the Powers. Russia in particular spent lavishly on Slav propaganda.

This had taught the Turks that the formation of national schools was followed by a speedy uprising of the subject peoples. They therefore forbade, under heavy penalties, the teaching and printing of the Albanian language. And in order to denationalise the Albanians they permitted the Greeks to open schools for the Christians, while they themselves started Turkish schools for the Moslems. The results are not those which were anticipated. Albanians trained in foreign schools are some of the most enthusiastic nationalists. Nor can they easily forgive the falsehoods with which it was attempted to poison their minds as children, when Greek teachers even told them that it was useless to pray in Albanian for Christ would not understand them. A certain Greek admitted to the writer a few years ago the failure of these efforts. "We have reared," he said, "serpents! The Greek schools, instead of creating for us Greek partisans in Albania, have created our worst foes."

We pointed out in reply that, as several centuries have failed to change the language and national sentiments of the Albanians who live in Greece, in spite of the efforts of the Greek schools in which Albanian children are forbidden to speak their mother tongue, it was mere folly to suppose that a few Greek schools in Albania could possibly influence the national and patriotic feelings of the inhabitants.

King Constantine gave the writer an overwhelming proof of the fact that the Albanians of Greece retain their national



feelings. "During the Balkan War," said the King, "the Greek Navy disembarked marines on the coast of Epirus for the purpose of attacking the Albanians. But a large part of the Greek Navy is recruited among the Albanians of Greece, and two whole battalions of marines, so soon as they found themselves face to face with their brother Albanians, promptly deserted without firing a shot. National sentiment proved to be stronger than duty."

King Constantine would certainly not have imparted this interesting fact had he suspected that we were unaware of it.

### EDUCATION.

Albania's struggle to obtain national education in the face of difficulties merits a chapter in the history of education.

Here we can relate it but briefly. Books and papers printed in London, Brussels and Bucarest were smuggled into the country at great risk and eagerly studied, in spite of the fact that anyone found in possession of such works was liable to even fifteen years' imprisonment. Many people, both Moslem and Christian, studied their own language from the Gospels and the Book of Genesis which were published in Albanian by the British and Foreign Bible Society, and circulated with great difficulty. Schoolmasters found guilty of teaching Albanian were severely punished—in some cases the extreme sentence of fifteen years being inflicted. But the Albanians did not relax their efforts.

In South Albania the Americans, to whom Albania is deeply indebted, opened a Girls' School at Koritza which was protected by the great Republic. This was a centre of national enthusiasm. The girls taught their brothers to write their mother tongue.

In the North education was better provided for. Both Italy and Austria, being anxious to obtain influence there, opened schools for boys, girls and infants in Scutari and Durazzo. And the Abbot of the Mirdites started a school in his mountains.

The Albanians took every advantage of the foreign schools. But though very grateful for the help afforded by them, no such bribes have induced them or will induce them to wish

to change their nationality or become the subjects of any foreign Power.

As for the Albanians who have received their education outside of Albania in English, French, American, Italian Turkish, or Greek schools, they may be reckoned as many thousands.

### RECENT EVENTS.

Such was the situation of Albania when the Young Turk revolution took place in 1908. To this the Albanians at first lent their hearty support, believing that it meant equal opportunities for all races. They were soon undeceived. The Young Turks began a policy of forcible Ottomanisation and the Albanians rose against it.

In 1912, after three years of fierce struggle, the Turkish Government realised that all attempts to forcibly denationalise the Albanians were vain and that they must be granted national recognition. Albania was at last on the point of gaining autonomy within her ethnographical limits.

These limits are as follows: Starting from Dülcigno and passing across the Lake of Scütari along the ancient Montenegrin frontier, Albania should include all the northern mountain clans of Triepshi, Hoti, Gruda, Klementi, Kastrati and Shkreli, together with all the Pulati clans. The frontier line should be drawn so as to include Ipek, Mitrovitza, Prishtina, Quillan, Katchanik and the western part of the former vilayet of Monastir, which should include Ochrida. Thence the line should continue south along the side of the Lake Presba, and pass near Florina and Kastoria, including all Albanian-speaking villages. For reasons which follow, the Pindus district should form part of the Albanian State. The frontier should thence be drawn to the River Arta and follow it to its mouth. That this was the southern limit of Albania in the first century is clearly defined by Strabo. "On sailing into the Gulf," he says, "on the right are the Arcanians, who are Greeks. On the left are the Cassipoei, a tribe of the Epirotes, extending as far as the recesses of the Gulf."

All the territories lying between these points and the sea constitute Albania historically and ethnographically. The inhabitants are identical in language, customs and traditions,



with the exception of a small minority of Kutzovlahs and Greeks.

The scheme for Albanian autonomy was actually set on foot by the Turkish Government. But this did not suit the already matured plans of the Balkan States, each of whom had planned to obtain territorial aggrandisement at Albania's expense.

Serbia, Montenegro, Greece and Bulgaria threw themselves upon the Turks in order to obtain portions of Albania before she should have time to establish herself.

Ostensibly these States rushed to war in order to liberate oppressed nationalities. In truth, each was actuated by the hope of proving stronger than its neighbour and thereby securing the lion's share of the plunder, especially parts of Albania.

The Albanians found themselves in a peculiarly difficult position. They wished to defend their own lands, but they had no desire to fight for the Turks. The Turks mistrusted them because of their recent revolts, and would not supply them with either arms or ammunition, and they possessed but small supplies.

They decided to remain neutral, and for the most part resisted only when attacked, and hoped, by proclaiming their neutrality and hoisting the Albanian flag, to obtain European recognition. But they were invaded by three of the Balkan armies.

The second Balkan War, during which the Balkan allies fought one another for the plunder, soon followed. The Carnegie Commission of Enquiry has sufficiently described the horrors and atrocities committed by these self-styled "liberators" on the populations they purported to set free.

Italy and Austria, both having interests in the Adriatic, protested against the entire dismemberment of Albania, and called on Europe to recognise her independence, as did also very emphatically we Albanians. And on January 1st, 1913, the Ambassadors of the Great Powers at the Conference of London decided upon creating Albania a neutral and independent State. But the Great Powers—not for the first time in their history—came under the malign influence of Imperial Russia, who intervened and insisted upon the cession of

much Albanian land. Her voice was dominant at the Conference. Albania emerged free but badly mutilated.

Regions populated by compact masses of Albanians, numbering in all some million and a-half souls, were annexed to the Kingdoms of Serbia, Montenegro and Greece, all of whom had previously violated Albania's neutrality and occupied her territory.

The Great Powers created Albania as an independent neutral State and took it under their protection. They decided that they would aid and guide its first steps. But all they did was to appoint an International Commission of Control, which did almost nothing and kept none of its promises, and to appoint a Prince without giving him any assistance.

Before Albania had time even to organise gendarmerie, the Greeks attacked and occupied a large part of South Albania, and the Commission looked on and took no steps, while Greek irregular bands and troops armed with artillery burnt and pillaged the villages and massacred the inhabitants. Between Tepeleni and Koritza three hundred villages were burnt. And in order to force the population either to starve or emigrate, the Greeks burnt even the standing crops in the fields.

The Albanians, who had no artillery and were poorly armed, fought bravely, and for a time were victorious; but the Greeks were reinforced by further troops, and the Albanians were forced to withdraw. Thousands of starving refugees crowded to Valona in the last stages of misery. But the International Commission, beyond supplying a little bread, took no steps.

While Albania, already plundered and devastated in the war of 1913, was struggling against Greek aggression and foreign intrigue and propaganda, the present world-war broke out.

### THE VIOLATION OF ALBANIA.

Scutari for over a year had been occupied by international forces under the able command of General G. F. Phillips. So soon as the world-war was imminent these forces quitted Albania. The French remained rather longer than the others, but they, too, soon went over into Montenegro. Scutari had



been completely disarmed during the international occupation, and was thus left quite defenceless.

The Prince Zu Wied, who had been selected by the Powers as ruler of Albania, retired on September 3rd, leaving the government of the country to the International Control Commission, all the members of which also departed shortly.

The Italians, who had not as yet entered into the war, might then have protected Albanian neutrality and thereby gained the lasting gratitude and friendship of Albania; but they contented themselves with occupying the Albanian island of Sasseno and then—in December, 1914—militarily occupying Valona.

The Montenegrins, though ostensibly engaged in opposing Austria, poured their troops into defenceless Scutari and remained there. No protest was made by the Powers for this unprovoked violation of the decision made by them in 1913 when they unanimously declared Scutari to be Albanian territory.

The Serbs also entered Albania for a short time, but withdrew again. Then came the debacle of the Serbs and their flight across the Albanian mountains into Scutari. This was fatal for Albania. The Austrian and Bulgarian forces poured into Albania in pursuit of them. All members of the Entente departed, and Albania was left to her fate. The Bulgars withdrew, but three-quarters of Albanian territory have been militarily occupied by Austria until the last few weeks.

Meanwhile, Italy had advanced in the South and occupied Tepelen and Argyrokastro.

The Greek troops of King Constantine had poured into South Albania and were using Koritza as a centre through which Austrian and German couriers could pass to or from Athens. They exported the foodstuffs, and the Albanian population was reduced to great straits. The French reached Koritza in December, 1916, evicting Greek troops; and at the request of the inhabitants of the whole district hoisted the Albanian flag at Koritza and proclaimed it an Albanian Republic.

The Italians extended their occupation, and on July 3rd, 1917, General Ferrero at Argyrokastro proclaimed the

independence of the whole of Albania under the protection of Italy.

Such is Albania's history. The waves of successive Empires have passed over her, and her people have remained staunch. The rule of Rome and of Byzantium have passed: The Balkan mediæval Empires were a mere ripple on the waters of time. The flood tide of the Turkish Empire has ebbed, and Albania remains as a granite crag above the troubled waters.

We must now consider the land itself and present circumstances.

### ALBANIA OF TO-DAY.

What is this land we Albanians love so much and which foreigners covet so much? It is situated in a valuable and desirable spot. Its port of Valona is one of the keys of the Adriatic. Not only is it strategically desirable, but it also contains fertile plains, well-forested mountains, and good pasture for flocks. It has more than one harbour, and its mineral wealth is as yet unexploited.

Small wonder that many Powers have struggled and intrigued to gain possession of it. No Power, however, would like to see another possess it. And when thieves fall out, honest men come by their own. So may it be with Albania!

It is obviously undesirable to hand over Albania entire to any one Power. But the partition of Albania between several Powers without consideration of the will of the people and the rights of nations is equally certain to lead to fresh trouble.

Continual and bloody fights would be certain to arise between Albania's new masters, which would be fostered and encouraged by the Albanians, who would seize the opportunities thus afforded and arise and strike out for their own independence. This is proved by the fact that the division of a large part of Albania among the Serbs, Greeks and Montenegrins by the Conference of London has but exasperated the hatred already existing between Bulgar, Serb and Greek. They fought each other, in fact, about Albanian territory. Territory to which they have no right whatever.

In order that the peace of Europe may be maintained, it is in the highest degree undesirable that the Albanian coast should fall into the hands of any Great Power, who would



make of the Adriatic a closed lake—and consequently a naval base—which would be a constant menace to the Mediterranean.

### THE CLAIMS OF ALBANIA'S NEIGHBOURS.

Let us now consider upon what foundations the claims of Albania's neighbours are based.

We have seen that towards the end of the seventeenth century the Serbs emigrated *en masse* from Kosovo vilayet and left it to its original inhabitants, the Albanians, who at once reoccupied it.

Since that time a certain number of Serbs have filtered back into the region, but they have always formed a very small minority, as the reports of many travellers testify.

To-day—sad to relate—even this minority has almost disappeared under the occupation of Austria, who reckoned on keeping this district for herself.

The claims of the Serbs are based only on ancient conquest. They were in truth rulers in Albania for only a part of the Middle Ages.

That the numerical superiority of the Albanians was and is an accepted fact, we may see from the following Report on the Population of North-East Albania made by Mr. Alvarez, of H.M. Consulate at Constantinople, August 27th, 1880.

“The races which inhabit this district, which *politically comprises the greater part of the vilayet of Kosovo and part of that of Monastir and the whole of Old or Turkish Serbia*, are the Albanian and the Serb. . . . Of the two, the Albanians are numerically far superior to the Serbians. . . . The Albanian element in the Kosovo vilayet has recently been further increased by the accession of many thousands of refugees from districts now, in virtue of the Treaty of Berlin, in Serbian possession, which, prior to the late war, were exclusively inhabited by the descendants of twelve Gheg tribes which at a remote period emigrated from Upper Albania. . . . The natural hatred existing between the Arnauts (Albanians) and the Serbians of the principality, fanned by the late war, has been intensified by the expulsion of Ghegs (North Albanians) in large numbers from the territory lately acquired by Serbia.”

The Serbs themselves recognised that the Albanians formed the bulk of the population. The Serbian delegate, Colonel Jovanovitch, wrote a letter to the Commission delimiting the frontiers on November 4th, 1878, requesting that the frontier should not be drawn along the left bank of the Truava, as it "would offer to the neighbour State a view of Vranje, which would continually be threatened by a surprise attack, an impossible defence and a sudden invasion of the Albanians." Vranje was on the ancient Serb frontier prior to the wars of 1912-1913.

Who were these Albanians from whom Colonel Jovanovitch feared sudden invasion? They were the Albanians of Kosovo vilayet, who then formed the overwhelming majority of the population and who to-day, if reports be true, form the entire population.

That the Serbian Government recognised in 1913 that these lands were not Serbian is amply proved by the fact that, in order to subjugate a million Albanians and perhaps also a million Bulgars, they drew up a series of laws for the annexed districts which are almost unequalled for severity.

"Le Règlement sur la Sécurité Publique," published on September 21st, 1913, and signed by King Peter, proves only too clearly that Serbia was dealing with a completely foreign population, which was ready at any moment to revolt against the Serbian yoke.

Bulgaria's claims on Albania are yet more fragile. They are based only on the fact that the Bulgars invaded Albania in the tenth and thirteenth centuries and were forced to retire from it.

As for Greek claims, they are not even based on historical conquest, for the Greeks have never conquered any part of Albania in the old days. They were, on the contrary, conquered by Albania's ancestors, the Macedonians.

When they demand Epirus, which is simply South Albania, they base their claim entirely upon religion and upon the schools which, as we have above described, the Turkish Government permitted them to open in the district.

Great trouble has arisen in the Balkans from the fact that at the time of the Turkish conquest the Turks recognised the Greek Patriarch as Head of all their Orthodox subjects. Ever



since that fatal day the Greeks have claimed all members of the Orthodox Church who were Turkish subjects, as "Greek." In former days, on these grounds, they claimed the whole of Macedonia, regardless of the nationality of the inhabitants. They displaced all the Bulgar and Serbian bishops, and even destroyed Slavonic books in the monasteries. In Greek eyes, all Orthodox are Greek. The Pope might with equal justice claim all French and English Catholics as Italians.

In North Epirus, which was recognised as Albanian by the Conference of London, the Greeks know very well they have nothing to hope for. They continue to demand this district because they hope by so doing to shut the mouths of us Albanians and to prevent us from demanding the restitution of South Epirus, which the Conference of London presented to Greece.

In South Epirus, starting from Cape Stiles, that is to say from the Albanian frontier as drawn by the Conference of London, as far as Preveza, the whole coast to a depth of about forty kilometres forms the province of Tchameria, which is inhabited by a solid Albanian population. Here the Greeks have endeavoured to sow discord between the Christian and Moslem Albanians, and thus to stifle a national movement.

In South Epirus, to the east of Tchameria, there are some Greek villages consisting either of Greeks who have settled there for commercial reasons or of Grecised Kutzovlahs. But they form a minority when compared to South Epirus as a whole. Even in Janina, the capital of South Albania, where the Greeks for over a century have concentrated their strongest propaganda, the Albanian and Jewish elements preponderate over the Greeks and Kutzovlahs. Neither Janina nor the above-mentioned Greek villages can be separated from Albania without being doomed to economic death.

This is the case also in the Pindus, which is exclusively inhabited by the Kutzovlahs, the descendants of the ancient Roman colonists. The Kutzovlahs gain their living by cattle-raising. They pass the summer in the Pindus mountains and go with their flocks in winter to the pasturages on the Albanian coast. For them, who are neither Greek nor Albanian, it is their own interest which causes them to choose

between the two. Which did they choose when the occasion offered?

The Greeks pretend that the inhabitants of Epirus are Greek in feeling. Facts are worth more than words.

The Treaty of Berlin awarded a part of Epirus to Greece—the territory, in fact, which lies between the town of Arta and the river Kalamas, which cuts Tchameria in two.

An International Commission went at this time to Preveza in order to effect the transfer of the district to His Hellenic Majesty. But the Commission found itself confronted by the opposition of the whole population and was forced to retire without fulfilling its purpose.

The population of Epirus rose like one man and opposed the cession of this Albanian district to Greece. And in consequence of this popular resistance the Greek frontier had to be drawn at Arta.

As for those Albanian territories which are disputed by their neighbours, the Albanians are quite prepared to accept, when the time comes, the decision of a Commission nominated by President Wilson or by the British Government, which shall make enquiries on the spot after due measures have been taken to ensure that the said populations may freely express their feelings and wishes, and that no aliens shall be temporarily imported for the purpose of falsifying facts.

## ITALY.

We must now consider the question of Italy with regard to Albania.

Albania's independence was proclaimed in 1913. But before she had time to organise or establish herself she was at once caught up by the whirlwind of opposing interests—those of Italy and Austria. Not only did the two currents paralyse Albania, but they encouraged the neighbour States to make existence impossible to her.

To-day the situation is completely changed. Austria has broken up completely, and on the frontier Albania will see arising in her place a large Slav State which is frankly hostile to her.

To guard against possible danger, Albania must seek a



support, and this time she will have no difficulty of choice.

But if Albania needs the support of Italy, Italy, too, needs the support of Albania. The new Yugo-Slav State will be animated with friendly sentiments for the Kingdom of Italy, but States do not base their future upon sentiments, but upon community of interests, which constitutes the only guarantee for a lasting friendship. And they are also bound to provide for all eventualities.

It is to Italy's interest that there should be a non-Slavonic buffer State which is sincerely devoted to her. She should therefore insist upon the reconstitution of the Albanian State, which should include within its frontiers all Albanian-inhabited districts. For to Italy this State is of vital importance.

The Secret Treaty signed in London in 1915—and as fatal for Italy herself as for Albania—would appear to have been imposed by Russia. Italy seized the first opportunity to denounce that portion which refers to the possible dismemberment of Albania, when she proclaimed the whole of Albania independent under her protection on June 3rd, 1917.

Albania needs the support of Italy, but only in so far as it does not affect her national sovereignty and independence.

A desire to impose upon Albania a protectorate, or a protection that borders upon a protectorate, would be an unpardonable political blunder.

Far from safeguarding and harmonising the interests of the two nations, it would have the contrary effect. Anything imposed from without, even if it be salutary, assumes an oppressive form in the eyes of the people and provokes hatred.

We do not believe that such is the intention of Italy.

Italy is in the right when she wishes to assure for herself the friendship and fidelity of Albania. This may be assured her by Albania's political and geographical position. But the Albanians are ready to assure Italy of their sincerity by more concrete guarantees, provided that these guarantees inflict no injury on Albania's national sovereignty.

## CONCLUSION.

After all the reasons we have given and the facts stated it is easy to understand not only that Albania cannot be dismembered, but that she is the key to the Balkan problem. It is in the interests of peace that Albania be reconstituted within her ethnographical limits and that she should be neutral and independent.

There are persons who either cannot or will not see clearly : persons for whom Albania does not exist, and who plan every description of combination and arrangement.

To such I would point out :—

1. All who have followed political events in the past recognise that the policy of non-interference and the lack of interest displayed by British diplomacy in the Balkans and in the Near East in the last few decades have been among the direct causes that unchained the world-war. The prestige and influence of Great Britain were such throughout these lands, that, had she so desired, she might have been the directing force of their policy and the undisputed arbitrator of their differences. This would have benefited all the world. German influence would have been powerless to establish itself, and all dreams of German expansion and domination in that direction must have perforce vanished. The past bitter experiences will not allow British statesmen to again fall into such errors, or permit them to be swayed by the various Balkan propaganda and intrigue. They will certainly take advantage of this dearly-bought occasion by giving a just solution to the Balkan problems and at the same time restoring the prestige to Great Britain in the Balkans and the Near East.
2. As we stated at the beginning of this brochure, everyone is aware that America has come to save the situation. Everyone recognises the huge sacrifices of the United States and honours them propor-



tionately. But the plotters and schemers appear to forget America's war aims, or not to take them seriously. In proportion as the forces of America came into the field, so did the language of President Wilson become clearer and more imperative when speaking of justice and the rights of nations, both great and small, to decide their own lot.

President Wilson's declarations may be summarised thus :  
 " We have entered into the war in order to free the world from slavery and to do justice to humanity. To those aims we shall adhere."

We have no doubt that President Wilson will so act, not because he possesses the strength to do so, but *because he has right on his side and the will of the peoples behind him.*

Strong in the righteousness of their cause, the Albanians have never despaired of its ultimate triumph. Whether the Albanian question be regarded from the point of view of justice or from the political point of view for the sake of the peace of the Balkans, and therefore of Europe, there can be but one solution—THE RESTORATION OF THE ALBANIAN STATE WITHIN ITS ETHNOGRAPHICAL LIMITS.

The Albanian race, which has had the strength to resist the storms of centuries and preserve its physical vigour and its spirit of independence, cannot now, in the twentieth century, submit to live in slavery, still less to disappear.

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